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# Buddhism



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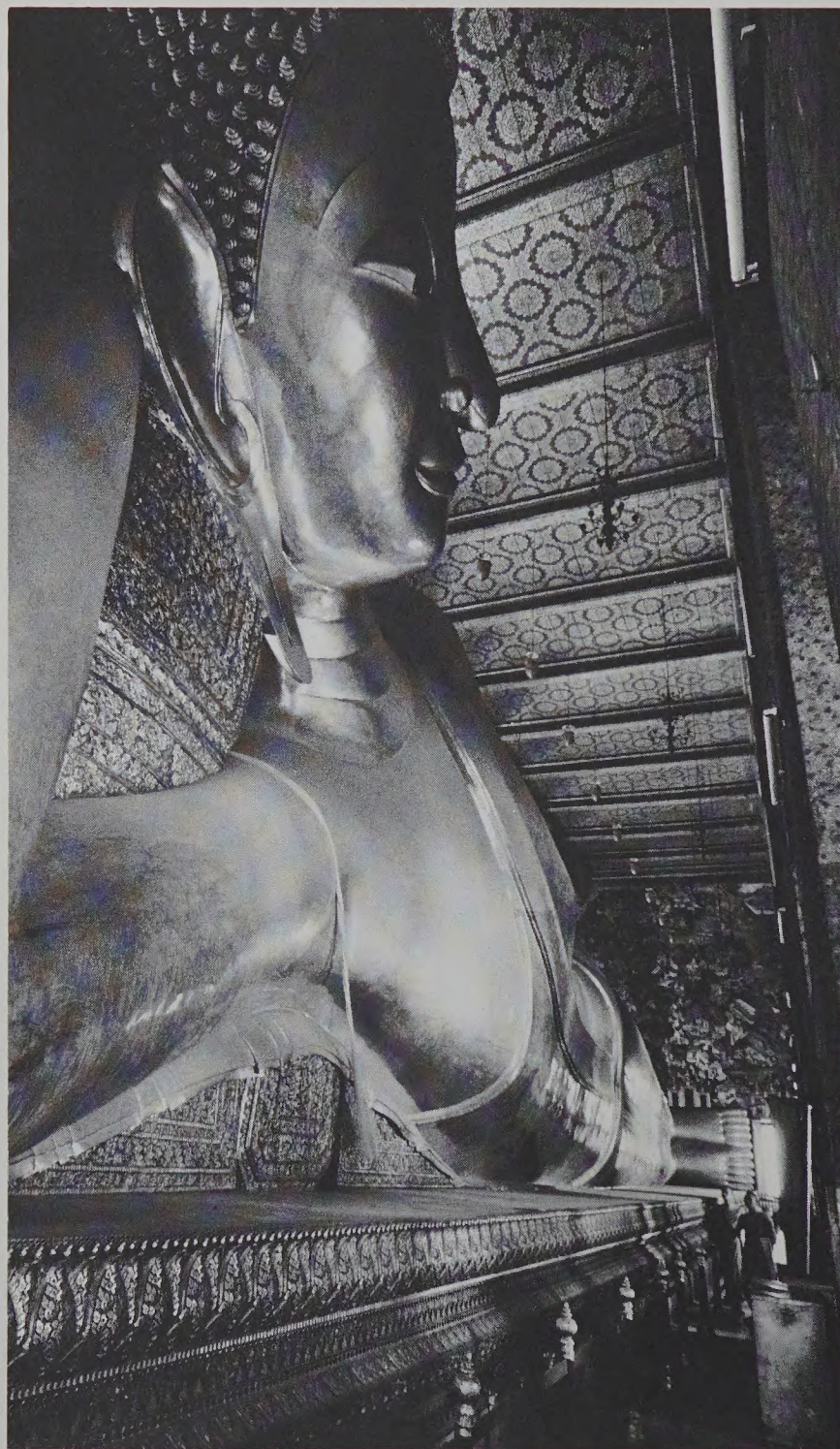


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Buddhism

**Social Studies Inquiry Program**

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ASIAN STUDIES INQUIRY PROGRAM

# Buddhism

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The questions raised by Buddha are among the fundamental concerns of human existence. Although Buddha shunned questions which are abstract and intellectually uncertain, some of his inquiries are implicitly metaphysical: Who am I? Whence did I come? What is my relationship to other men and to the world in which I live? What is my true nature? Each of the world's religions and philosophies has attempted to answer these questions in its own way. To study a religion is to explore some of the basic beliefs and practices embedded in culture, for religion is a principal source of values. To know something about the religion of a particular people is to know something about their motivation—to gain insight into why they think and behave as they do.

Only a few of the world's religions are peculiar to an individual culture. Most have spilled over political boundaries and penetrated more than one civilization. When one culture absorbs a new religion, a mutual impact is felt. Pre-existing religious beliefs, ancient traditions, and social customs have an influence upon the new religion. Such is the case with Buddhism. Although Buddhism originated at a certain place and at a certain time, its development has been affected by the histories and cultures of the places where it now exists. In turn, Buddhism has affected the histories and cultures of diverse peoples.





*Buddhist monks in Thailand place their hands together as a sign of respect, rather than worship, for they honor Buddha as a teacher, not a god.*



## "Happiness is my duty"

Phra Ratanavedi, a monk of the Theravada (Hinayana) school discusses here the role of the monk and the significance of Buddhism in Thailand today.

Buddhism was born 2,500 years ago in India, a country where for centuries its influence in politics and religion was paramount. Today, however, Buddhism has been virtually eliminated from India, though it has survived throughout the Far East. It takes two forms: its purest is Hinayana Buddhism, to be found in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos (this is also called southern Buddhism); the other, Mahayana (northern Buddhism), a more flexible form, can be found in China and Japan.

Bangkok, capital of Thailand, is one of the great centres of "Buddhism of the Small Vehicle"—the Hinayana tradition (Mahayana is the "Great Vehicle"). There stands Wat Pho, the chief temple of Thailand, built by the first king of the present dynasty some 180 years ago. And there we went to meet Phra Ratanavedi. At thirty-nine, he is one of the 500 most important Buddhist monks in a country that can number up to a quarter of a million monks during the rainy season—the so-called Buddhist period of Lent, the time between sowing and harvest.

Who are these monks? And what constitutes the spiritual and material universe of a Buddhist monk today? These were the questions we asked, and we found the answers in the life story of Phra Ratanavedi, as he told it.

Like all other Buddhist monks he wore a saffron-yellow robe which left the right shoulder and the right side of the chest uncovered. Nevertheless, with a superb carriage and the supple gait of an Olympic athlete, his dark skin, sensitive nostrils and long, well-manicured hands, Phra Ratanavedi stood out from his colleagues. He was exceptionally gay, simple and boyish.

"Like all other monks," he explained, "I have a whole collection of names. My family name is Limsirichai. My first name is Kamol, which means 'lotus.' My qualifying name is Kowido (which means I'm supposed to be intelligent—I can't imagine why). Finally there is my title, Ratanavedi, which means 'someone who knows the Three Pearls.' These Three Pearls are *Buddha*, *Dharma*, *Sangha*. *Buddha* is the Lord Buddha. *Dharma* is the teaching of

†Danielle Hunebelle, "Happiness is my duty," *Réalités* (June, 1963).



Buddha. And *Sangha* means the brotherhood of monks.

"The King has also bestowed upon me the honorary religious title of Chaokun. I say the King, because the hierarchy proposes, and the King disposes. In our country the church is separate from the state, but Buddhism, with its twenty thousand temples, is still the official religion.

"Why, then, should the kings be enthroned by Indian Brahmins and not by Buddhist monks? The reason is that Buddhism came late to Thailand, and all the other ancient faiths, like Animism and Brahmanism, continued to flourish and hold the respect of the population.

"I myself was born in a village near Nakhon Pathom, about fifty miles from Bangkok. My father was a modest farmer who grew rice, sesame, peanuts, coconuts and jujubes. There were eight of us children in the family.

"At the age of seven I started to go to the school in the temple courtyard. I learned to read under the supervision of a monk. My elder brothers went to work in the rice fields—a hard job, that. Personally, I was all for a less strenuous life.

"And so when I was thirteen I became a novice, so as to be able to go on with my studies. Now I attended a different temple, about two miles distant from our village. There were nine of us novices there, and some forty monks.

"Here I exchanged short trousers and shirt for the yellow robe. I didn't much take to it at first—it was rather like putting on a uniform for the first time. Then they shaved my head and eyebrows, which upset me a good deal. And I wasn't allowed to eat between noon and the morning of the following day—which I

found very trying indeed.

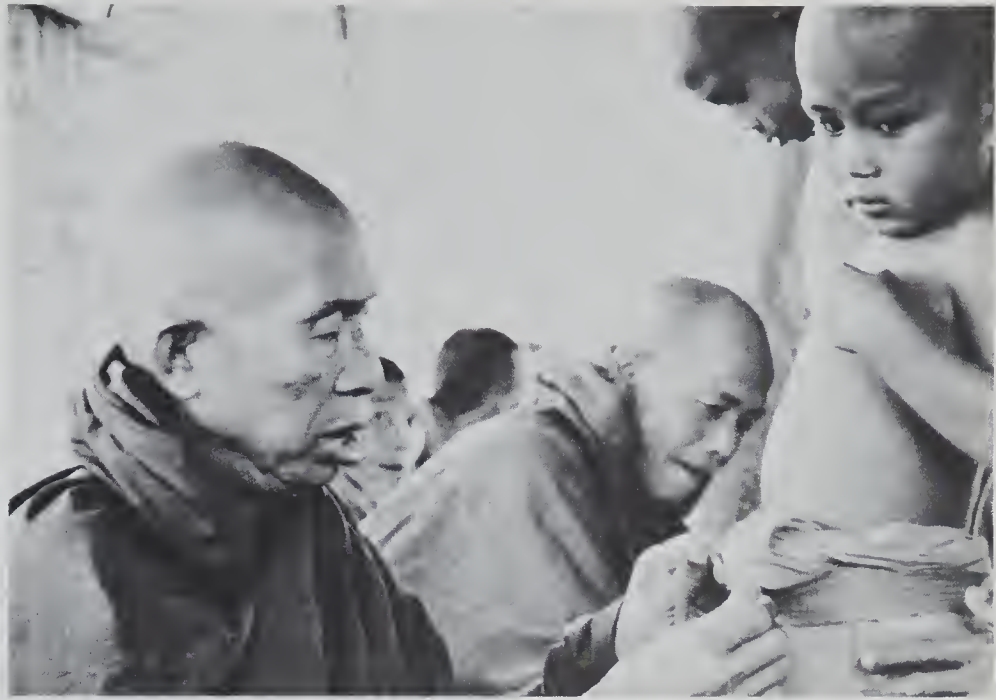
"I remained a novice until I was twenty. I paid careful attention to the way I spoke, so as to give offence to no one. Early every morning I went round with my copper bowl collecting alms. I duly watered the flowers in the garden, and read up the Law—the first commandments and the life of the Lord Buddha.

"I was no longer able to play with my former playmates. I couldn't even touch my mother's arm, let alone kiss her. But these sacrifices were by no means too harsh for me because the very fact that I was a monk brought respect and happiness to my whole family.

"When I was sixteen the monk who had been tutoring me said: 'Listen, where we live is the provinces, and here you will never learn the Pali language properly. I'm going to write to Bangkok, to the Wat Pho temple, to see if we can get you enrolled in the Pali class there.' As it was, I already found my classwork in my little home town very difficult to do, because I have never been very bright. So the idea of learning Pali inspired me with hardly any enthusiasm at all. But Tien, my tutor, insisted.

"To cut a long story short, for the next seven years I was engaged in learning Pali. Like all other monks who so wish it, I was excused from military service. And during the whole of this period I wasn't taught anything about history or literature—nothing but Pali. The counsels of the Lord Buddha are in the Pali tongue, and about sixty per cent of the words in the Thai language come from it.

"When I was twenty-one, I was ordained in the presence of twenty-five monks. I had asked quite simply to be allowed to



*When a young boy enters the temple to become a novice, he receives a saffron robe indicating the beginning of his education.*

enter the temple, without taking any vows.

"In our country, you see, it is exceedingly rare for a monk to remain a monk throughout his life. Seventy per cent are monks for a few months only; twenty per cent remain monks for ten years or so, but not more than ten in every hundred remain monks in the true sense for ever.

"This two-way traffic between the temple and the lay life, and vice versa, is not a bad thing at all. It is indeed an excellent thing: at least we are giving the people concerned a chance to inform and educate themselves. In Ceylon and Burma, where a monk stays a monk for the whole of his life, you don't get all that many candidates coming forward. But just look at the intake during the rainy season: more than a hundred thousand monks a year (some of them married, some not). And for three months, we give them instruction in the

story and the philosophy of the Lord Buddha, as well as a digest of the two hundred and twenty-seven Rules, known as the *Patimokha*.<sup>1</sup>

"In country districts any man of thirty likes to have done his three months. In the first place this establishes your position favourably in local society. In the second place it gladdens the heart of your parents, since the credit reflects upon the whole family.

"In the towns, the tradition is not all that different. You see this monk: he's thirty-six years old, and an electrical engineer; that one is a treasury official; and the one over there is the son of the chief of police. During their time in the temple they continue to be credited with their salaries, which are paid direct to their families by the administration or

1. A collection of 227 monastic rules.



the factory.

"A few years ago the King himself did three months in the Wat Bavornives temple; and every morning he was to be seen barefoot in the streets, going on his alms-collecting rounds. Buddhism is a great leveller.

"When a person feels he has had enough instruction, he takes himself back into secular life. Not everyone can keep all of the two hundred and twenty-seven Rules; and as soon as a man finds himself becoming unhappy as a monk, or getting hungry when every layman is sitting down to his evening meal, and when he is seized by a yearning to drink wine or beget children, then he abandons the robe. Buddhism is founded upon individual responsibility: it is therefore up to each individual to decide when to enter the temple and when to leave it.

"At the Wat Pho temple I was concerned first with the problems of literary communication and then with those of literary construction; after which, I became a teacher of Pali and Thai. Now I am teaching Thai to two hundred monks of the Wat Pho, and moral philosophy and the story of the Lord Buddha in various girls' schools.

"I also organize sermons on the radio, sometimes preaching myself, on Sundays. I do the same thing in government offices and ministries on weekdays. I carry the chief responsibilities of the Association of Preaching Priests, which consists of the three hundred most carefully selected preachers. I also take care of questions of posts and mails, and the temple's relations with the outside world in general.

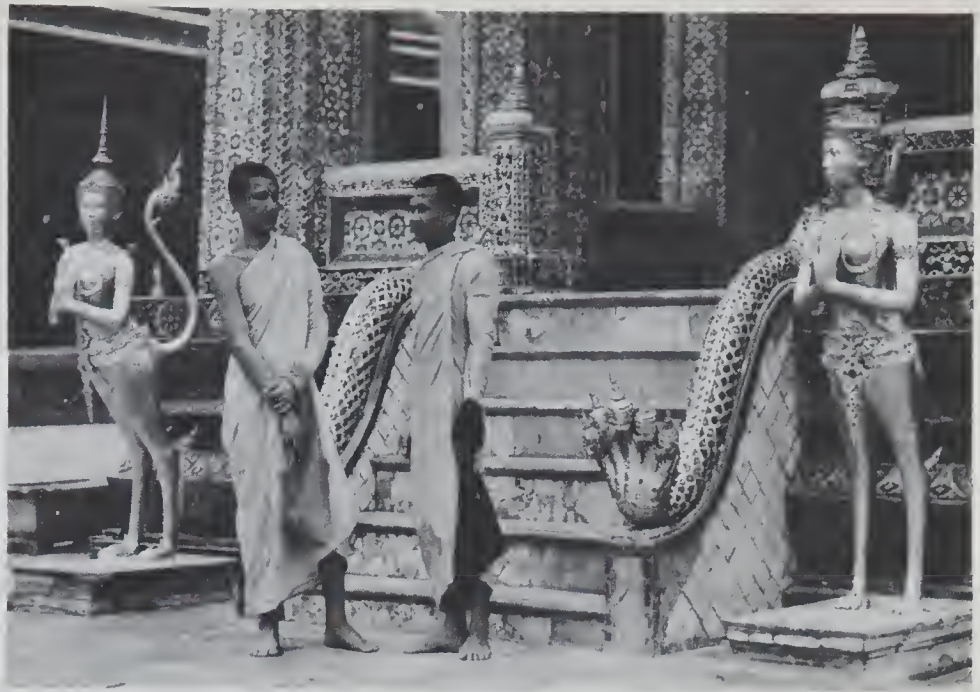
"From the time of his ordination each monk must decide whether to choose

study or meditation. In our country fewer than five per cent of monks practise inner meditation, a hard and compelling mental activity, whose aim is to perceive the nature of the visible. We call this *Vipassana*, to distinguish it from the *Samatha*—daily exercises in meditation that are within anyone's capacity. The *Vipassana Kammathana* is based upon sixteen kinds of understanding, starting with an understanding of the distinction between spirit and body, which makes it possible, once total detachment—the cessation of all suffering—has been achieved, to blossom out into the wonderful *Nirvana*.

"The *Vipassana* is practised in some four hundred temples, two in every hundred temples in Thailand. We also have many hermits in the forest, and five or six famous teachers, such as Buddha Das Bhikkhu ('bhikkhu' is the Pali for 'monk') who is preoccupied with the confrontation of Eastern and Western philosophies, and Panna Nanda Bhikkhu. But the overwhelming majority of Thailand's monks are scholarly, not meditative, monks.

"Don't forget that Buddhism is not a religion, but a teaching. Anyone who refers to me as a priest does so quite incorrectly. I am a student in search of the truth; but because one must scrupulously observe certain rules, the search eventually takes on a sacred character.

"Buddhist education, which is the essential function of all our temples and pagodas, is divided into three stages. The first is the *Dharma*, given in the Thai language, and lasting three years. This stage deals with the story of the Lord Buddha, and the teaching of the two hundred and twenty-seven Rules. The second is a nine-year course in Pali on the writings of the



*These two novices from Thailand can choose not to take vows before being initiated as monks, in which case they are free to come and go as they please.*

Lord Buddha. The third is modern education: four years in the Buddhist university.

“When I say that Buddhism is not a religion, it is because for us the Lord Buddha is not God. He is our teacher, who has shown us how to behave. If, when we address him, we put our hands together, that is out of respect—we do the same when we greet someone.

“We do not pray as Christians pray: we neither ask the Lord Buddha to protect us nor to pardon us. We evoke his goodness and goodwill when we are reciting stanzas written by him, but we do not invoke it.

“Most people simply do not understand Buddhism. They have never really studied it, so they get it all wrong. But we never try to compel people to understand, and we don’t do any proselytizing. The

Lord Buddha certainly does not ask that everyone should be a Buddhist—only that everyone should behave well.

“In Thailand you still find a house of the spirits in every humble dwelling place and every little courtyard—there’s even one in the courtyard of our own temple. These houses of the spirits are miniature pagodas, perched up in the branches of trees like dovecots. Inside burn little joss-sticks surrounded by various statuettes and festoons. People believe that the spirits of the dead continue to inhabit the houses of the living, and who are we to contradict them?

“This morning a highly-educated middle-class woman came to ask if I would call up the spirit of her father, so that she could communicate with him. Sitting cross-legged on the carpet we proceeded to wind a ball of wool round and round a crystal



cup, and each took one end of the wool, which was to act as a medium. Then we recited the appeal of the Lord Buddha, so that the dead father could then take due delight in his daughter's offerings.

"In much the same sort of way I have often been invited to 'inaugurate' new homes, and to call down upon them the blessing and goodwill of the spirits. In these cases, I recite various stanzas and receive in exchange a few hundred or maybe even a few thousand small coins, as alms.

"If we are tolerant towards every kind of belief, it is because we are disposed to explain rather than to convert. We never say: you ought to be a Buddhist. We would rather have quality than quantity. We prefer a few authentic Buddhists to a lot of mediocre people who might bring Buddhism into disrepute. That is why our teaching has spread so slowly. The primary objection of Buddhism is to get the individual to become responsible for himself; therefore it is the individual who counts. For us the individual is the best ingredient of society—indeed, he is the very foundation of society. If the individual is no good, the society that contains him is no good. Consequently, the first duty is to help ourselves. Only when we have suppressed the pain inside ourselves, when we are at peace with ourselves, can we hope to become valuable elements in the community.

"How does one proceed in order to suppress the pain? What the Lord Buddha said was this: 'Do not cling to life, for life is the source of all wretchedness and suffering. Wherever desire is, there is pain.' The Lord Buddha teaches us reality as it touches ourselves, our gradual ageing,

our death. When people realize just what they themselves are, and when they have had the precise nature of the world and of their own beings illuminated for them, they suffer less.

"It's rather like this glass: if someone tells me it's capable of being broken, and one day I drop it, then I am not terribly upset—because I know its properties. But if I am ignorant of the fact that it can easily break, then I attach great importance to it, and I shall be miserable when it finally does break.

"We aspire to change not the world itself, but people's feelings, from which their thoughts stem. It is the spiritual, not the material well-being of individuals that concerns us. Otherwise we'd be in danger of having links with the world, attachments—the source of perpetual sorrow.

"You ask if I practise yoga to help me attain a state of detachment. No. I believe it is fruitless to impose upon oneself such physical tests. When you have done from four to seven miles barefoot every morning collecting alms, I think you have done enough physical training for the day. There are not many yogis in Thailand. It took me four years to attain a state of self-control through exercises in meditation and the observance of rules. Then everything suddenly became easy—it's like learning to drive a car.

"In these exercises in meditation we make ourselves concentrate physically on a given object—a certain point, for instance. Our aim is to prevent our attention from wandering while we are reciting stanzas. We set about purifying, clarifying and unifying our spirit. Say that one of your relations dies, you would weep. I

would control myself, telling myself that to die is quite simply in the nature of things.

"As for the two hundred and twenty-seven Rules, they vary tremendously in importance. Only breaches of the first five commandments—thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not lie; thou shalt not drink alcohol; thou shalt not commit adultery—can lead to a monk's downfall. And indeed there are various compromises. For instance, I who have never killed a fly or an ant am prepared to eat meat and fish—provided, of course, that they come to me as offerings, and as things that have been killed by other people. The only absolutely forbidden flesh is that of the snake, the dog, the elephant, the horse and the human being.

"Personally, I am a man of action, not a thinker. I force myself to live the teaching of the Lord Buddha and not to dissect it. The creation of the world, for instance, is something that we never discuss. The Lord Buddha himself never spoke about it, because he did not believe that anything of value could come from the discussion of such a subject. The world is bound to end sometime. One day it will break in pieces like this glass—but when and how we just do not know.

"You think I'm a fatalist? Certainly not, I believe in *Karma*, the doctrine of action: good actions serve to change our destiny. Insofar as there is attachment, there must be rebirth or reincarnation. The circumstances in which this rebirth occurs may be relatively better or worse, depending on one's behaviour in the previous existence.

"Suppose a man has done a good deal of harm and a little bit of good: first he will go to hell, then he will be born again

in paradise, after which, either as angel or demon, a dog or a flower, he will assume human form again.

"If you always follow the path of goodness, you will reach the goal all the more swiftly. Which goal? In theory, the supreme illumination, the entry into *Nirvana*. But very few actually get as far as *Nirvana*—the idea that they do is really a myth. Most people are in for a never-ending transmigration. I personally have far too many attachments for me to claim to aspire to *Nirvana*.

"What attachments? Well, for one thing, I am afraid of death. Death is the unknown, the utterly obscure thing. When my own father died I did not weep, because I am a Buddhist, but I did feel a great sadness. And this in spite of the fact that I know it is the lot of all men to die. Then, too, my spirit is not purified, I am always losing my temper; I am not sufficiently intelligent to see with the eyes of the Lord Buddha, I just have eyes like everyone else. People may tell me that there is no real difference between beauty and ugliness; but when it's a question of a pretty woman, I am certainly not detached. And I have not lost the instinct of ownership. I talk about *my* glass and *my* robe—and I do like getting presents.

"The Lord Buddha said: 'Do not attach yourself to anything.' I know the Lord Buddha's commandments, but I am not fully capable of carrying them out. It's like knowing the theory of dancing, but not being able to dance. There are plenty of monks like myself. I don't know one who is completely detached from everything. But that is no reason for leaving the temple. The monk is simply duty-bound to behave well, to be happy, and to



harm no one by his words.

"Do I take any interest in the outside world? Well, I read the papers every day, which is probably more than most monks do. Economic and political problems are things with which monks cannot concern themselves—it is not our business to intrude into those spheres. We do not vote and we cannot stand for election, for that would imply attachment to the world.

"As citizens of a country which is violently anticommunist, we are bound only to respect the law. Last year the abbot who was rector of our Buddhist university and his right-hand man were both arrested and condemned to twelve months' imprisonment for having accepted an invitation to visit Peking. Not one monk reacted to this incident.

"Each individual Buddhist is alone responsible, and answerable, for his actions. Quite clearly we do not know the world at all well. I have only ever travelled in the countries bordering on my own, so when you ask which is the country in which people have the happiest life or which are the most progressive nations, I feel like the blind man who saw an elephant—do you know the fable?

"Well, there were five blind men who wanted to get the right idea about what an elephant looked like, so they asked if they could each touch the animal. The first one touched its head and announced: 'The elephant is a bowl.' The second one touched its leg and said: 'The elephant is a column.' The third one touched its ear, and assumed that the elephant was a fan. The fourth one touched its tail, and declared that the elephant was a big fly whisk. The fifth one touched its belly, and concluded that the elephant was the

side of a wall. Whenever I am asked to express an opinion about foreign lands I'm always afraid that I'm a blind man touching the legs or the ear of the elephant.

"Do you deduce from all this that we lead a cosy, egoistic existence? All I can say is that to be responsible for oneself is as important as being responsible for the world. We obey a teaching that leads to personal happiness: when other people notice that we are at peace with ourselves and full of benevolence to others, they may easily feel moved to imitate us. If people would only study the philosophy of Buddha, they would have no need of atomic bombs.

"Actually, we can at any moment opt to go into a monastery, and there to concentrate on our own work, whether it be study or meditation, without any further obligation. As long as we observe the Rule, nobody obliges us either to say prayers or to do work for the community. You never hear a Buddhist say 'one *must*'—always 'one *could*.'

"The way I spend my time is up to me. I get up every morning at six (I sleep on matting in my roomy cell, which has a bathroom built on to it). Members of my family bring offerings to the temple for me—boiled rice, fruit and soup. Then I go on my rounds collecting alms in the streets (we are allowed neither to ask for anything nor to refuse anything).

"Then I eat, sitting on the ground with the two novices and the five monks of whom I have charge, I attend to the business of the day, and sometimes I go to the temple to pray. I have lunch (our last meal of the day must be over by noon at the latest), and after midday I deal with var-



*Since a monk may neither earn money nor beg, he depends upon the generosity of the local people for food, mainly rice, which he must eat before noon.*

ious matters concerning the public. We have no contact with the tradesmen, we do no cooking, breeding of animals, or manual work.

"In my capacity as secretary of the temple, I have a bank account in my name; but as a matter of principle a monk does not handle money. At the time of ceremonies, such as the inauguration of new schools and houses, or cremations, or the installation of the naja, or cobra symbol, on the roof of a new pagoda, we often receive a small sum of money in addition to the usual offerings (tea, medicines, cigarettes, matches, cushions and sticks of incense). In this case, the junior monk accompanying me receives the envelope, and I get a piece of paper on which is written the total amount of money contained in the envelope.

"I own three robes, three small offertory bags and two pairs of sandals. I have one

fan for everyday ceremonies, and another which bears the insignia of my rank, for royal occasions. I have notebooks, books and an umbrella in my cell. I may not drive a car, or be alone with a woman.

"The proudest moment of my life came three years ago, when I was able to get a school built for my village. Instead of the makeshift straw hut where I learned to read when I was a child, there is now, thanks to the contributions I have been able to collect, a solid and permanent schoolhouse, which holds four hundred children. One day, perhaps, I shall decide to defrock. There are so many leisure hours in the religious life that in the end one tends to get a little bored. But even if I do get married and have children, I know that at some time or other I shall take the robe once more, for Buddhism has brought me the most precious thing in existence: peace."





*This third-century Indian marble relief depicts Prince Gautama leaving his home town, Kapilāvastu.*

## Life of Buddha

Buddhism is one of India's most important contributions to civilization. Nearly extinct in its homeland, it has nevertheless become one of the world's great religions. While Buddha probably did not intend to found a new religion, the practical and non-speculative nature of his teachings constitute a departure from established Hinduism. Most biographical data on Buddha is difficult to evaluate. Although his teachings and the specific events of his life are probably accurate, the earliest biography of Buddha was not written until two hundred years after his death. As is the case with the founders of other great religions, the life of Buddha has been embroidered with myth and legend.

Prince Gautama, the name of Buddha before he attained his illumination, was born in 560 B.C. at Kapilāvastu, in northern India. At his birth wise men prophesied that either he would become the greatest monarch on earth or, stung by the woes of men, would renounce the world and become a great religious leader. King Śuddhodhana, his father, meditated within himself: 'Stung by the woes of men, he will renounce the world. My son shall never know the woes of men.' The king was determined that his son should be the greatest ruler in the world and that there should exist no possibility of his becoming a religious mendicant.

So, legend says, the king built a palace, and beside it laid out a garden opening on

a park that stretched for many miles in every direction. In this palace the young prince lived, and there grew to manhood amid beautiful surroundings and in association with youthful, happy companions. He was bright and cheerful, clever at books and games, and always exhibited a loving disposition. From his earliest years he was kind and affectionate towards all living beings, including all dumb creatures. So true was this that even when he was a little boy his friends called him 'the compassionate one.'

When he had grown to be a young man he married the beautiful Yaśodharā, and from that time he seemed to be caught in a network of roses. A son was born to him, whom he named Rāhula. Prince Gautama

†Swami Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Anchor Books Ed., 1964).



was then about thirty years old.

One day, during this period of his life, he bade his charioteer drive him through the city that lay beyond the park surrounding the palace, for he desired to view the city of Kapilāvastu and know life as it was lived by the people. As he rode through the streets of the city, he saw many things, among them children playing and men and women carrying on their work. At all this he was pleased, for he cried to his charioteer, 'I see here labour, and poverty, and hunger; yet so much beauty, love, and joy are mingled with them—surely life, after all, is very sweet.'

No sooner had he uttered these words than there came into view, one after another, the three woes of men—weariness, disease, and death. This was the turning point of his life.

First came weariness. Before him appeared an old, old man, tottering on his crutches, which he held with trembling hands. The charioteer explained: 'All men are subject to old age, and old age, if it lasts long enough, will always end thus.'

Then drew near to him a man, ghastly to look upon, suffering from the deadly poison of leprosy. Prince Gautama ran straight to him, and embracing him cried, 'My brother!' Again did the charioteer explain what the prince saw. He said that the man was suffering from a disease and that every man is subject to disease in many forms. 'And this is the life,' mused Gautama, 'that I thought so sweet!' For some time he was silent. Then he asked, 'How can one escape from life? What friend has he to release him?' 'Death,' replied the charioteer. 'Look! There come bearers of the dead, carrying one to the riverside to

burn.

'But indeed,' he continued, 'men do not wish to die. Death, they think, is their worst enemy. Him they hate and try to escape, though there is no escape.'

'Take me home,' Prince Gautama now commanded the driver. He had been 'stung by the woes of men'. Thenceforth he sought a way to escape misery, not for himself only but for all humanity. His heart melted in sympathy and compassion for all beings.

The life he was living no longer offered him joy or sweetness. Restlessness came upon him, until at last, as he lay on his couch, he heard a voice calling to him, a cry of agony, as it were, from all humanity: 'Awake! Thou the awakened! Arise, and help the world! Sleep no more!' So must he seek a way of salvation.

Thereupon he arose and stole to the bedside of his sleeping wife and bade her good-bye by gently kissing her feet. For he knew that she would bear half the sacrifice he was about to make, and that hers would be half the wisdom he sought, also, and half the glory.

Thus Prince Gautama renounced the world, the world that was his—a kingdom, a beautiful wife, a loving son—in order to heed the call of suffering humanity. For six or seven years he wandered through the land, spending his time in prayer and meditation. He visited many sages and masters, but he never found a reply to his obstinate questioning. At last he seated himself under a Bo-tree in Gaya, and, firmly resolved to realize the truth, fell into deepest meditation. There, under the tree, after prolonged wrestling with his spirit, he discovered the true secret of life and death, and the knowledge that



*A shrine has been built under a Bo-tree, or tree of enlightenment. The Bo-tree was sacred in India long before Buddha attained nirvana while sitting beneath one.*

can be found only within oneself. Thenceforth he was no longer known by his family name; he became the Buddha—the Awakened One, the Blessed One.

After he had attained illumination, he went straightway to Banaras, for he was not content to gain eternal peace for himself alone. There, at Sarnath, he preached his first sermon. There also for the first time he called freedom and eternal peace nirvāna, and the life of struggle in search of it the Way of Peace.

In no way did he forget Yaśodharā, his beloved wife, who in her palace was living the life of a nun as she did her utmost to share her husband's life. On one occasion, as Buddha in company with his disciple Ānanda entered the palace to meet Yaśodhārā, Rāhula approached his father and asked for his inheritance. Ānanda, the chief disciple, with the permission of

Buddha, gave the lad the yellow cloth, the emblem of renunciation, and admitted him to the Way of Peace.

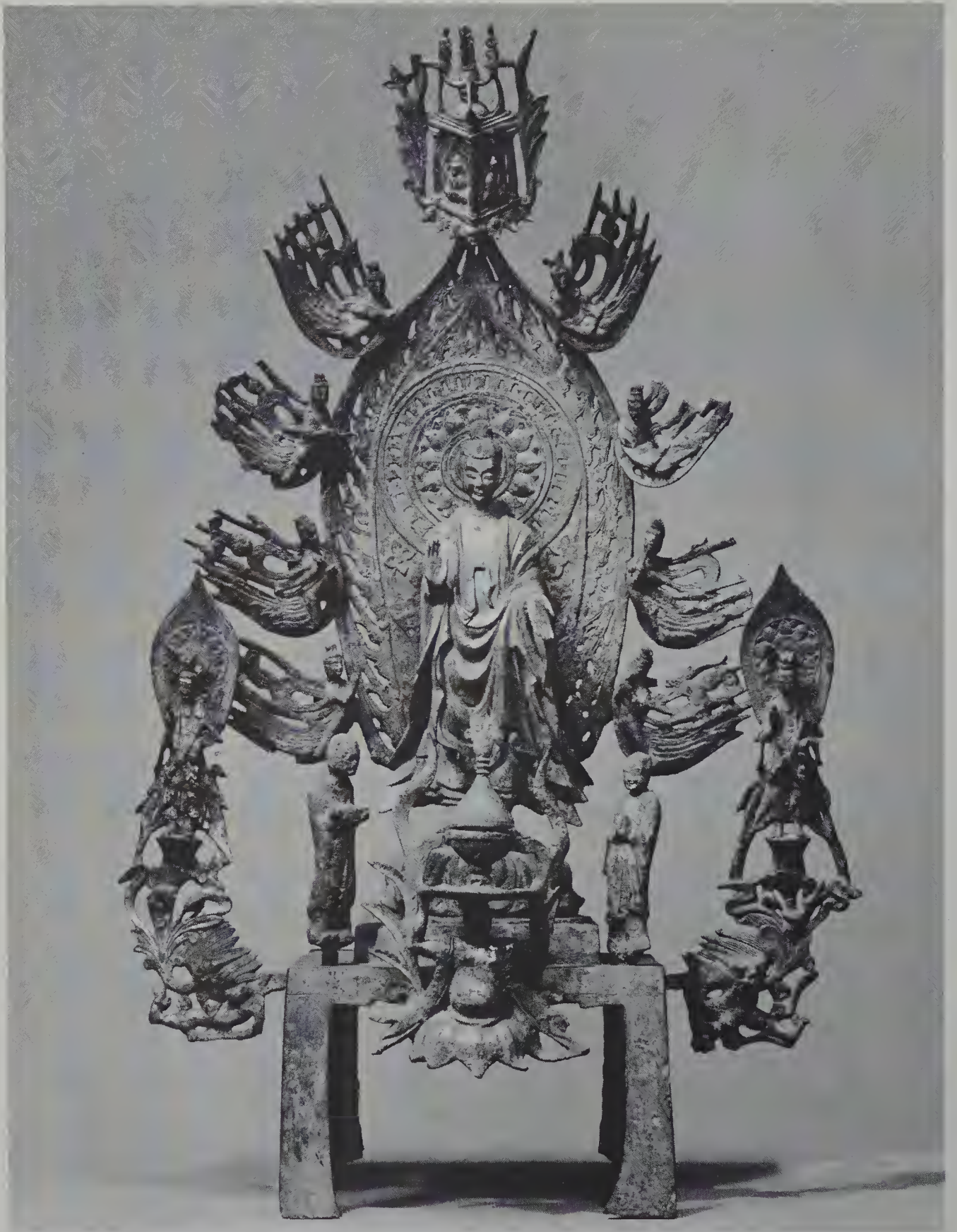
Then they saw the mother, behind her son, evidently longing to enter the Order. Thereupon Ānanda asked 'Master, may a woman not enter the Order? May she not be one of us?'

And Buddha replied: 'Nay, do not the three woes come to women as well as to men? Why should their feet also not tread the Way of Peace? My Truth and my Order are for all. Yet this request, Ānanda, was for you to make.'

For more than forty years thereafter Buddha preached his truth. At the age of eighty he passed from the earth.

He is known by many names: Buddha, The Awakened One; Śākyamuni, the Sage of the Śākyas; Tathāgata, He Who Has Attained the Highest Truth.





*The eight figures of this Chinese altarpiece symbolize the eight virtues that lead to enlightenment.*

## The Four Noble Truths

According to tradition, it was in his first sermon after he attained enlightenment that Buddha expounded *The Four Noble Truths* and *The Noble Eightfold Path*. Although certain sects of the Mahayana branch of Buddhism have emphasized the necessity of faith alone for the achievement of enlightenment, Buddha's original teaching seems to stress also the need for self-discipline.

Thus I have heard. Once the Lord was at Vārānasī, at the deer park called Isipatana. There he addressed the five monks:

There are two ends not to be served by a wanderer. What are these two? The pursuit of desires and of the pleasure which springs from desire, which is base, common, leading to rebirth, ignoble, and unprofitable; and the pursuit of pain and hardship, which is grievous, ignoble, and unprofitable. The Middle Way of the Tathāgata avoids both these ends. It is enlightened, it brings clear vision, it makes for wisdom, and leads to peace, insight, enlightenment, and Nirvāna. What is the Middle Way? . . . It is the Noble Eightfold Path—Right Views, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. This is the Middle Way. . . .

And this is the Noble Truth of Sorrow. Birth is sorrow, age is sorrow, disease is

sorrow, death is sorrow; contact with the unpleasant is sorrow, separation from the pleasant is sorrow, every wish unfulfilled is sorrow—in short all the five components of individuality are sorrow.

And this is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Sorrow. It arises from craving, which leads to rebirth, which brings delight and passion, and seeks pleasure now here, now there—the craving for sensual pleasure, the craving for continued life, the craving for power.

And this is the Noble Truth of the Stopping of Sorrow. It is the complete stopping of that craving, so that no passion remains, leaving it, being emancipated from it, being released from it, giving no place to it.

And this is the Noble Truth of the Way which Leads to the Stopping of Sorrow. It is the Noble Eightfold Path—Right Views, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

†William Theodore De Bary, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964).





*Mahayana Buddhists worship divinities such as "Ti Tsang Bodhisattva," the Merciful Helper of the Dead.*

## Mahayana and Theravada

In matters of religion, Buddhism is divided into two principal schools of thought. Mahayana Buddhism worships Buddha as a divine being. The ideal of the Mahayana is the Bodhisattva—the being destined for Enlightenment. More emphasis is placed on compassion than on discipline. Theravada (The Way of the Elders), or Hinayana, is the traditional form of Buddhism. This older school reveres Buddha as a great human being, but not as a divinity. Theravada Buddhism attaches much importance to the brotherhood of monks and to the development of self-control and wisdom. The personification of the Theravada ideal is the *aharat*, “the holy one,” or “the private Buddha.”

### The Bodhisattva

The essential difference between Mahayana and Theravāda Buddhism is in the doctrine of the bodhisattva, who, in Mahāyāna, becomes a divine savior, and whose example the believer is urged to follow. It must be remembered that all good Buddhists, from the Mahāyāna point of view, are bodhisattvas in the making, and the many descriptions of bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna texts provide ideals for the guidance of monk and layman alike. One of the chief qualities of the bodhisattva is his immense compassion for the world of mortals.

(From *Astasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*)

The bodhisattva is endowed with wisdom of a kind whereby he looks on all beings as though victims going to the

slaughter. And immense compassion grips him. His divine eye sees . . . innumerable beings, and he is filled with great distress at what he sees, for many bear the burden of past deeds which will be punished in purgatory, others will have unfortunate rebirths which will divide them from the Buddha and his teachings, others must soon be slain, others are caught in the net of false doctrine, others cannot find the path (of salvation), while others have gained a favorable rebirth only to lose it again.

So he pours out his love and compassion upon all those beings, and attends to them, thinking, “I shall become the savior of all beings, and set them free from their sufferings.”

†William Theodore De Bary, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964).





*This intricate gold statue of Buddha is famous for its forty-two arms.*

### The Mahāyāna Ideal Is Higher Than That of the Theravāda

Mahāyāna teachers claimed that the ideal of the Theravādins—complete loss of personality as perfected beings in Nirvāna was fundamentally selfish and trivial. The truly perfected being should devote all his powers to saving suffering mortals. The following passage elucidates this point. It purports to be a dialogue between the Buddha and one of his chief disciples, Shāriputra (Pali *Sāriputta*).

(From *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*).

“What do you think, Shāriputra? Do any of the disciples and Private Buddhas ever

think, ‘After we have gained full enlightenment we will bring innumerable beings . . . to complete Nirvāna?’”

“Certainly not, Lord!”

“But,” said the Lord, “the bodhisattva (has this resolve). . . . A firefly . . . doesn’t imagine that its glow will light up all India or shine all over it, and so the disciples and Private Buddhas don’t think that they should lead all beings to Nirvāna . . . after they have gained full enlightenment. But the disc of the sun, when it has risen, lights up all India and shines all over it. Similarly the bodhisattva, . . . when he has gained full enlightenment, brings countless beings to Nirvāna.”

## The Last Instructions of the Buddha

The following passage occurs in the *Discourse of the Great Passing-away* which describes the last days and death of the Buddha. The Master, an old and ailing man, is on the way to the hills where he was born, and where soon he is to die. These are among his last recorded instructions to his disciples. The following passage perhaps gives the quintessence of Theravāda Buddhism, with its call for self-reliant striving against all that seems base and evil.

(From *Dīgha Nikāya*)

Soon after this the Lord began to recover, and when he was quite free from sickness he came out of his lodging and sat in its shadow on a seat spread out for him. The Venerable Ānanda went up to him, paid his respects, sat down to one side, and spoke to the Lord thus:

“I have seen the Lord in health, and I have seen the Lord in sickness; and when I saw that the Lord was sick my body became as weak as a creeper, my sight dimmed, and all my faculties weakened. But yet I was a little comforted by the thought that the Lord would not pass away until he had left his instructions concerning the Order.”

“What, Ānanda! Does the Order expect that of me? I have taught the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrines; for . . . with the Tathāgata there is no such thing as the closed fist of the teacher who keeps some things back. If anyone thinks ‘It is I who will lead the Order,’ or ‘The Order depends on me,’ he is the one who should lay down instructions concerning the Order. But the Tathāgata has no such thought, so why should he leave instruc-

tions? I am old now, Ānanda, and full of years; my journey nears its end, and I have reached my sum of days, for I am nearly eighty years old. Just as a worn-out cart can only be kept going if it is tied up with thongs, so the body of the Tathāgata can only be kept going by bandaging it. Only when the Tathāgata no longer attends to any outward object, when all separate sensation stops and he is deep in inner concentration, is his body at ease.

“So, Ānanda, you must be your own lamps, be your own refuges. Take refuge in nothing outside yourselves. Hold firm to the truth as a lamp and a refuge, and do not look for refuge to anything besides yourselves. A monk becomes his own lamp and refuge by continually looking on his body, feelings, perceptions, moods, and ideas in such a manner that he conquers the cravings and depressions of ordinary men and is always strenuous, self-possessed, and collected in mind. Whoever among my monks does this, either now or when I am dead, if he is anxious to learn, will reach the summit.”





*The Vietnamese Buddhist monks have departed from their traditional detachment and have become openly active in the political life of their country, as evidenced by the numerous self-immolations and demonstrations.*

## Buddhists in Saigon

On July 11, 1963, an aged Buddhist monk set fire to himself on a street in Saigon. Almost immediately he became a hero and his self-immolation became an incident of international import. His act dramatized to the world the Buddhist protest against repressive government; and simultaneously it announced Buddhism's involvement in the political affairs of Vietnam. The Buddhist crisis became one of the factors which ultimately led to the fall of the Diem government. In his article, Dr. Morgan, professor of religion at Colgate University, discusses Buddhism in Vietnam and the problems it poses for the brotherhood of monks.

In order to understand the role of the Buddhists in Vietnam today we must remember that their form of Buddhism is distinctively Vietnamese: we must not be misled by generalizations drawn from our knowledge of Buddhism in other countries or from our own religious beliefs. Such a bewildering variety is found in Buddhism that it is misleading to talk about "the Buddhists" without making it clear which Buddhists we are discussing.

The Buddhist order of monks, some 2,500 years old, has existed longer than any other social organization in the world today, maintaining a recognizable pattern of Buddhist teachings and at the same time consciously adapting to the varying cultures of Asia, to friendly or indifferent

or antagonistic governments, and in modern times adjusting to colonialism, communism, extreme nationalism and the expanding Western culture. Though subject to a wide variety of beliefs and practices all are Buddhists and consider themselves to be members of the Sangha—the order of monks.

Today about 80 per cent of the Vietnamese people are Buddhist; of these, 90 per cent follow the Mahayana schools of Buddhism (similar to the Buddhism of China and Japan) and the other 10 per cent follow Theravada Buddhism (closely allied with the Buddhism of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma and Ceylon). Their belief in the law of karma and rebirth has important consequences for

† Kenneth W. Morgan, "Buddhists in Saigon," *The Christian Century*, Vol. IXXXIII, No. 4 (January 26, 1966).



their attitudes toward community responsibilities and the war. The belief in karma holds that the law of cause and effect operates without exception in the moral or spiritual or mental world just as truly as in the physical: every desire, every thought, carries with it its inevitable consequence. If the desired result is not realized in this life it will shape the existence in the next. We are the sum of the results of past thoughts and desires, and our present thoughts and desires plus the combination of unexpired forces from our past will shape our future—through a continuing cycle of rebirths. Since the process of rebirth continues through generations it gives a perspective on time which is quite different from the point of view common in the West: this life is not the only one, everything need not be accomplished now before it is too late, good actions will eventually bring good results.

Whether to be reached through devotion or meditative disciplines leading to self-control, the ultimate goal of the Buddhist is to live so that he becomes free from the karmic fetters which bind him to the cycle of rebirths, that is, to live free from anger, free from greed, to live a life of compassion. Thus, incidentally, the disciplines of Buddhism would be a necessary prelude to any actions in society, and should be a guide as to how one should act as an individual or as a member of a group. In practice, although the monks are quick to respond when asked what should be the action of an individual, there is little evidence of serious consideration of group action in accordance with their religious beliefs. There is in Vietnam today a strong feeling that Buddhism must be involved in society, but no clear

picture of how Buddhists should act together in government or social organization.

The growing concern for an understanding of the role of Buddhism in society is indicated in the reception accorded the ideas of Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh: 5,000 copies of his book *Engaged Buddhism* were sold in three weeks last spring; and each time he lectured in the major cities of South Vietnam on the need for young men and women to be trained for social work in the villages, from 4,000 to 5,000 people came to hear him. That Buddhism has become engaged in the life of Vietnam is now clear; how it should be and how it will be engaged is the problem of this generation.

Under French colonial rule only the Roman Catholic Church was recognized as a church; Buddhists had to register as an association and were restricted in their organized activities. In 1952 a rather loose organization was formed by Buddhist groups from north, central and southern Vietnam meeting at Hanoi; at the time of the Diem<sup>1</sup> crisis this organization was strengthened as a means of defense against what were considered to be efforts to eliminate Buddhism. Their protest against the Diem government was not directed toward gaining political power, but it happened to come at a time when it projected them into the leadership of a general revolution and brought them the support of many people who had been only nominally Buddhist. Vietnamese intellectuals, educated abroad, had not been interested in Buddhism but had turned to it when they became disap-

1. Ngo Dinh Diem was elected president when South Vietnam became a republic in 1955. He ruled the country like a dictator, and was killed in 1963 by army officers who seized control of the government.

pointed with the French. As evidence of the new vitality the monks cite the magazines and newspapers they now publish, their new and vigorous organization for all Buddhists, their recently established university and secondary schools, clinics and orphanages. Part of the explanation for this new vitality they see in their awareness of the communist persecution of Buddhists in China, Tibet and North Vietnam. They know that Buddhist monks are no longer safe when traveling in many areas dominated by the Vietcong.

For most Vietnamese the symbol of this new Buddhist vitality—the most moving expression of their new determination and hope—is the memory of the monks who gave their lives by self-burning. They do not view the self-burning as suicide, for suicide is thought of as self-destruction through lack of courage or hope, as an expression of despair. Those monks who burned themselves to death did it to call attention to the suffering endured by the Vietnamese and to seek to move their oppressors to relent. The monks believe that to say something while experiencing the extreme pain of burning is, in the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, “to say it with the utmost of courage, frankness, determination, and sincerity. . . . The Vietnamese monk, by burning himself, says with all his strength and determination that he can endure the greatest of sufferings to protect his people.” The fact that the monk burns himself to death is incidental in the light of his belief in the continuous cycle of rebirths, and he expects his self-sacrifice to benefit his people. Again and again monks and lay Buddhists testify that because of the sacrifice of the monks who

burned themselves to death they must make a greater effort to be better Buddhists and to understand the ways in which they can express their Buddhism constructively.

The Buddhists' first step in expressing their new concern for engaged Buddhism was to create an organization designed to unite all Vietnamese Buddhists. This organization they refer to as the Sangha, but it differs from the usual Sangha in that it includes both Theravada and Mahayana monks. The Vien Tang Thong, as it is called in Vietnam, is sometimes referred to in the foreign press as the Buddhist Church; this is a mistranslation and is sometimes criticized by Buddhist laymen as an attempt to impose the organization of Christian churches on Buddhism. The Vien Tang Thong is the spiritual head of all Vietnamese Buddhism; it is concerned with the exposition of Buddhist law and the supervision of the monks and nuns, has nominal authority over Buddhist activities and represents Buddhism at religious and civic ceremonial functions. Its head is Hoa-Thuong Tinh Khiet, an elderly, highly respected Mahayana monk, and his deputy is Hoa-Thuong Toi Tang, an elderly Theravada monk.

The general secretary of the Vien Tang Thong is Thich Tri Quang, the monk who scaled the American embassy wall for refuge during the Diem uprising. He is charming, alert, friendly, with an active mind open to the give-and-take of a probing inquiry. He avoids discussion of political affairs, but other Buddhists describe him as the most politically inclined of the monks, brilliant, occasionally devious, acquainted with but rejecting





*Vietnamese Buddhist monks sit out a dispute with the government.*

communist ideology, and a powerful leader. If he were to become politically active his position as general secretary might give him some prestige, but the Vien Tang Thong as now organized would be an ineffective instrument for him.

Under the spiritual guidance of the Vien Tang Thong is the Vien Hoa Dao, translated as the Organization for the Executing of the Dharma, with the word "dharma" used in the sense of the Buddhist way of life. The Vien Tang Thong is responsible for interpreting the Buddhist way of life and the Vien Hoa Dao for putting it into practice. The executive head of the latter organization is Thich Tam Chau, a Mahayana monk who is described by other Buddhists as a wise, responsible man and one of the three or four leaders who can get things done and can restrain those who might try to maneuver the Buddhists into political activities. He is a key man in Vietnamese Buddhism, close to the people, perceptive, and a devoted worker. He says that French colonialism and the recent events of the war have stimulated Buddhists to protect

Buddhism and to become active in the life of the people, and that the Vien Hoa Dao is an attempt to give them constructive and effective opportunities to express their new concerns.

Thich Tam Chau's first assistant is Thich Phap Tri, a kindly, pleasant Theravadin who had executive experience before becoming a monk. He is responsible for finances and buildings, and his main concern at the moment is the building of the new center for Vien Hoa Dao. Elaborate architectural plans have been completed for a great center of Buddhism which will have at the gateway a statue of Thich Quang Duc, the first monk who burned himself to death. In the center of the complex will be a large temple, with a smaller temple beside it as a hall of martyrs for honoring the monks who have immolated themselves or have been killed in the name of Buddhism; there will be housing quarters for the high monks of the Sangha and leading monks of the Vien Hoa Dao will have their offices there. One million dollars will be needed for the buildings and much more for the social

service and educational projects; a diligent effort is being made to increase Buddhist giving, which up to now has been chiefly to local pagodas.

The section of the Vien Hoa Dao dealing with monks and nuns is under Thich Tri Tinh. Theravada and Mahayana monks do not live together in the same pagoda and they have separate training, but all are under Thich Tri Tinh and his office has an official register of them and issues their identification cards. Training is largely carried on in the local pagodas, but some monks attend the new Buddhist university, Van Hanh, and some Theravadins learn a bit about Mahayana there. In practice this office has limited authority over the training of monks and nuns, and the general level of their education is low. Other sections of the Vien Hoa Dao deal with the spread of Buddhist teachings, with publications and with the development of social service activities such as relief work, summer youth projects, clinics, orphanages, schools and colleges. Within the past two years the Buddhists in Saigon, in cooperation with the Vien Hoa Dao, have established a secondary school for 1,300 students, a clinic, an orphanage and a new university.

The most interesting and promising educational venture in Vietnam today is the two-year-old Van Hanh University in Saigon, under the leadership of three able monks: Thich Minh Chau, Thich Nhat Hanh and Thich Tien An. It has a faculty of letters and a faculty of Buddhist studies with 400 students each, and in August 1965 it opened a school of youth for social service. The university operates with almost no funds, pagodas are used for classrooms, tuition is low and teachers

and administrators serve without pay.

The school of youth for social service opened with 250 students who will combine practical experience with classroom studies, dividing their time between the villages and their classrooms in Saigon. The curriculum will be pointed toward village work in education, health, livelihood and means for overcoming social inertia. The students must learn how to win the confidence of the villagers; must study the dialects of the country, the religions of the villagers, public health, economics, community organization; must develop skills in agriculture, carpentry, teaching methods, painting, music and recreation. This is more than a university program: it is a movement to help the people to help themselves, to make their lives in the villages worth protecting. Because the need is so great the school has been started before the necessary funds are available.

In observing the activities of the Buddhists engaged in the social life of Vietnam one is impressed by the quality of the leaders who have risen to the challenge of an appallingly difficult situation, and by their closeness to the people and their understanding of the needs. Under great pressures from the young lay Buddhists and the younger monks, they have shown themselves competent to control and guide these impatient groups. They are aware of the social inertia of the villages and are taking constructive measures to overcome it. They see the need for education, for health services, for overcoming poverty, and within the past two years<sup>2</sup> have taken the first firm steps toward solving these problems.

2. 1964 and 1965.





*Zen Buddhists often meditate in front of special gardens that seem to lack logic or order. Such meditation frees the onlooker from human restrictions and helps him reach enlightenment.*

## An Introduction to Zen

Like other forms of Buddhism, the central idea of Zen is based on the search for truth. Its methods, however, are in some ways radically different from those employed by other sects. Zen is one of the main schools within the Mahayana branch of Buddhism. Zen came to Japan from China, where it was known as *Ch'an*. The meaning of the word Zen is meditation (in Sanskrit, *dhyana*). The historical origins of the sect are obscure. According to legend, Zen was carried to China in A.D. 520 by an Indian monk named Bodhidharma. Although some of its teachings reached Japan as early as the 700's, Zen did not flourish there as a sect for another five hundred years. Its impact on the minds of men and on various aspects of Japanese culture during succeeding centuries has been both subtle and pervasive.

Zen has been described as a mystical pantheism, a system of metaphysics taught with riddles and blows, a sort of existentialist cult, a blandly not-to-be-explained higher way of daily life. Zen is something of all of these, but basically it is a variety of Buddhism.

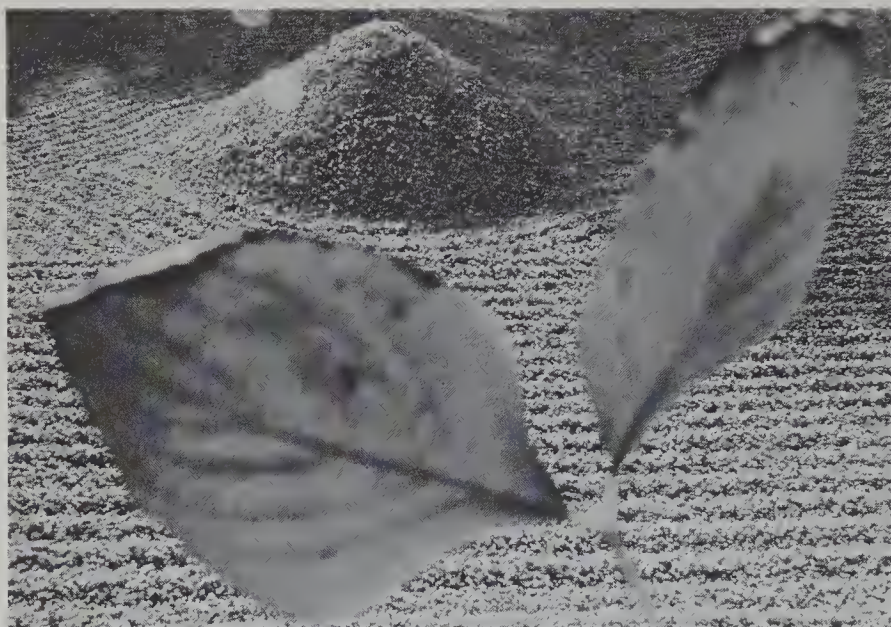
Buddha taught that there is an eternal, endless universe of Absolute Being, of which we are temporary incarnations. As such, we are subject to delusions and temptations, pain and trouble, illness and death. But by studying to find wisdom, living to do good, and concentrating to achieve control over mind and body, we

can escape from the dominance of the physical world, and we can transmit a good inheritance of *karma* to our later incarnations. *Karma* has been defined as "that moral kernel of any being which survives death and continues in transmigration."

Buddha taught that a succession of beings, each improving its common inheritance of *karma*, can eventually rise to an existence entirely free of this world: the state of *nirvana*. Buddha himself is said to have achieved *nirvana* at his death—that is, permanent enlightenment in a state free from rebirth.

†*Zen Buddhism* (Mount Vernon, N.Y.: Peter Pauper Press, 1959).





*This small mound in a Zen garden serves as an object of meditation.*

A thousand years after Buddha, a monk from India came to China with a modified Buddhism that was destined to become widely practiced in China, and eventually in Japan, under the name Zen (from the Sanskrit *Dhyana* and the Chinese *Ch'an*). This traveler was called Bodhidharma (*Bodhi* = Enlightenment, *Dharma* = Truthful Way), and is believed to have come to China in A.D. 520.

Following Bodhidharma, Zen was transmitted through a body of monks and a series of patriarchs—each patriarch leaving his robe and begging bowl to his chosen successor as a badge of office. The sixth patriarch was a lowly monk who was not a scholar: his selection confirmed the fact that by this time Zen had become a way of life for the simple as well as for the studious devotee. This was about one hundred and fifty years after Bodhidharma.

The achieving of enlightenment in Zen is not at all a rational or methodical pro-

cess. It is completely non-rational, unexplainable, and intuitive. The Zen training in concentration, in the characteristic cross-legged position, and the Zen teaching of *koans* (non-logical riddles and stories) are designed to put the student in a state where he can abandon logic and make the leap upward into enlightenment. In Japanese this state of enlightenment is called *satori*.

In *satori* we are able to look beyond our immediate world into the universe of original, eternal, Absolute Being—often called the Great Emptiness—which *was* before our world was formed, and *will* be after it disappears. In this condition we lose our sense of Self, and know ourselves to be part of the great Oneness of all. Knowing ourselves to be part of Absolute Being, our ego and our problems of ego—sin, pain, poverty, fear—all dissolve. This is salvation in Zen terms.

Having reached the state of *satori*, we become aware that *everything* in all this



*The strict discipline of Zen Buddhism requires intense meditation periods.*

world about us, all other living and non-living things, even our lowest animal functions, are part of Absolute Being—and are thus essentially holy. Mountains and rocks, trees and grass-blades, elephants and microbes, all share equally in the Eternal.

This awareness permits us to go about our daily life with a new freedom, a new sureness, a new sense of doing the work of Absolute Being even in the smallest or dirtiest task of the present life. It is this sense also that makes the tea ceremony in Japan a ritual of devotion; that makes a seventeen-syllable haiku poem a universal statement of faith; that makes a quick brush-drawing a gesture of piety in Eternity.

Beyond this awareness that all things are part of Absolute Being and share its holiness comes a sense of the interpenetration of all things. Each of us is the apex of a cone of past ancestors, and the beliefs, acts, and events which determined

them. Each of us also is a point from which a new cone of individuals and events will arise, each in some part a product of what we are. We are all a part of Absolute Being, and we are all a part of each other.

This concept has been described in the allegory of Indra's<sup>1</sup> Net: There is an endless net of threads throughout the universe. The horizontal threads are in space, the vertical threads are in time. At every crossing of threads is an individual, and every individual is a crystal bead. The great light of Absolute Being illuminates and penetrates every crystal bead; but also every crystal bead reflects not only the light from every other crystal in the net—but also every reflection of every reflection throughout the universe.

Thus we learn that we live in all other beings, all other things—and that they live in us. Our lives are richer—and more filled with obligations—than we ever knew before.

1. The chief god of the ancient Hindu religion.





*Young monks experience great difficulty staying awake during the long meditations.*

## Life in a Zen Monastery

The Zen monastery differs from the type of monastery with which most Americans are familiar. Although some monks remain in the monastery for their entire lives, it is quite common for others to leave and to lead secular lives outside in the larger society. The monastery is in fact a school that trains students in the Zen perspective.

Eiheiji awakens at 3:30 A.M. The seminarist on morning duty races through the wide corridors, sounding a gong. Its loud peals reverberate through the silent mountains, heralding the start of a new day. One hundred and twenty seminarists and monks jump out of their bedding.

Life in a Zen monastery is similar to communal life in the army but without rank distinctions as all are considered equal. Each person is allowed a basin of water for his morning ablutions. After the mouth has been rinsed with the first dipperful, the rest of the water is used for face washing. When the bedding has been folded and clothes have been adjusted, sitting meditation commences.

Differing from the Rinzai sect, the Zen of the Sodo sect does not include *koan* (questions and answers). Seminarists are taught to be "as natural as flowing water and singing birds." Zen is very strict about posture. Sitting in lotus fashion, the back must remain rigid. This is the posture

of Buddha.

During meditation, the head seminarist walks around the hall, a flat rod about one and a half meters long held in one hand. One of the hardest things to get used to in a Zen monastery is the lack of sleep and young seminarists often doze off during meditation. Then the rod, called *kyosaku*, comes into action as the head seminarist brings it down upon the back of the nodding seminarist. Others awake at the sound of his approaching footsteps, but the sound of the blow echoes through the hall and both striker and struck then press their palms together and bow to each other.

A senior monk, Yoshitake, explained while guiding us around: "When the sound of the blow echoes loudly, it is not as painful as one thinks. During the summer, it causes cold sweat to pour out, which cools one off. It can be bracing!"

In about forty minutes, sitting meditation ends and morning duties begin. A

† "Zen," *The East*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1964).





*Costumes of the Japanese Buddhist priests have been worn since the 700's.*

procession of monks slowly climbs the long flight of steps leading to the *hatto*, where services are held. When it is time to enter, a small gong at the entrance to the hall is struck. The monks line up on both sides of the spacious hall, in the center of which sits the officiating monk who then bows left and right to the sacred images.

*Sutras*<sup>1</sup> are then chanted to the accompaniment of the *mokugyo* (wooden drum) which is struck by a seminarist in cadence with the chanting. The *mokugyo* is a wooden bell-shaped drum more than one meter in height. It emits a deep bass note, quieter than that in a jazz orchestra but capable of imparting a syncopated rhythm. As the chanting reaches its climax, the monks stand and start walking sedately around the hall.

Recalling the words of Dogen<sup>2</sup> "*to learn the Way of Buddha is to learn one's self,*"

1. Sermons given by the Buddha.

2. Dogen Zenji was a Japanese Zen priest who, in the 1300's, brought the practice of meditation (zazen) from China to Japan.

we asked the monk Yoshitake a rather unkind question. "Why do you do this exercise?"

He answered: "Essentially, to learn one's own self, this exercise is unnecessary but young seminarists easily lose the object of their meditation and find it difficult to enter into the Way of Buddha. Therefore Buddhist images must first be worshipped and exercises held. After all, it is very difficult to find one's self."

At 6:30 A.M., breakfast is brought to the meditation hall and the board there is sounded. Because of the rule of silence, boards are found in profusion throughout the monastery and are used to signal various activities. If the board is struck a few seconds early or a few seconds late, the seminarist in charge is severely reprimanded as punctuality and exactitude are one of the precepts of Zen.

When breakfast comes, all sit in their appointed places in unison and a pre-meal prayer is recited. The meal consists



*Novices always kneel and pray before eating.*

of rice gruel, roasted salt and pickled vegetables—a low calory meal which would delight a diet-conscious woman.

Breakfast over, cleaning starts and their shaven heads gleaming, seminarists appear everywhere with broom, bucket and duster in hand.

Instruction begins at 9 A.M. The officiating monk commences his class when a wooden board is sounded three times. The pupils file into the hall, their *sutra* books wrapped in an amice and held level with their eyes. During instruction they must sit correctly and are not allowed to ask questions. They say that for beginners, the pain of their cramped legs preoccupies their mind more than do the lectures.

At 11 A.M., noon exercises begin. Then it is time for the mid-day meal which consists of boiled wheat, *misoshiru* (bean curd soup) and pickles. The evening meal is the same. Very little animal proteins or fats are included in the diet and one is

amazed that the men can subsist on such light meals. A seminarist with a healthy glow to his cheeks, said: "Not only do we subsist, but since coming here, I have put on weight and my health has improved. If one continues this life, one grows to a ripe old age! The chief abbot," he continued, "is 92 years old. A monk still in his seventies is considered young here!"

It is somewhat of a mystery.

At 1 P.M., various duties commence and the seminarists are allotted their work for the day. This may include sawing, splitting logs, weeding, sweeping etc., while others guide groups of believers visiting the monastery.

Eiheiji has its own generator and is completely self-sufficient, while all the daily chores are undertaken by the seminarists. They even fell trees on mountainsides so steep that a professional woodcutter would be appalled. Why are these duties so important? Let us try to explain it by the following anecdote:



In China, Hyakujo, a great Zen master, laid great stress on the merits of labor and never took a moment off to rest. Seeing this, his disciples one day hid his implements and Hyakujo was then forced to stop his labors. But he refused to eat for the whole of that day. When the surprised disciples asked him why, Hyakujo replied: "One day without labor, one day without food."

The only days of rest at Eihei-ji are those on dates ending in a 4 or a 9. No work is done on those days, heads are shaven and baths are permitted, while at the mid-day meal an extra dish is served.

The young seminarists are not permitted to leave the monastery except on official business. Monastery regulations prohibit new entrants from leaving the precincts for the first six months.

At 4 P.M., evening services start.

Twilight here comes early as the monastery is deep in the mountains and the faces of the monks and seminarists kneeling in prayer in the hall are starkly white against the darkened background.

Suddenly we noticed a young girl in *kimono* and *hakama* (skirt-like apparel worn over the *kimono*) seated in prayer behind the monks.

"Who is she?" we queried. Monk Yoshitake replied that she was a Zen follower. We caught up with her upon her return to her room and asked her why she had come to Eihei-ji.

Miss Sato, who had recently graduated from the university replied: "Since my graduation, I feel I have lost my trust in people. I am not a Buddhist nor do I know much about Eihei-ji; but I wanted to isolate myself from the world and came here.

"I have only been here four days and

do not yet know what Zen is, but I am applying myself to learn. Life here is very strict and I did not expect to have to participate in the duties here, but I find the communal life of a Zen monastery to be ideal. Anyway, I am glad I came. I intend to continue for another week."

Five P.M. is dinner time but it is called *yakuseki*, meaning "medicine stone." In Zen monasteries, only breakfast and lunch are the formal meals. However, when the monks and seminarists reach the end of their day, they are fatigued by their labors and unless an evening meal is partaken of, their health would suffer. Therefore it is now the custom to call this meal *yakuseki* or "medicine meal."

After the meal is over, *yaza* or evening meditation, starts. The tired monks are besieged by sleepiness around this time and the sound of the disciplinary rod echoes frequently.

The most rigorous form of sitting meditation is the one called *Rohachi Dai Sesshin-e* which lasts for one week from December 1st. During this period, neither labor nor instruction is engaged in and meditation continues day and night without sleep. At this season, Eihei-ji is blanketed in snow. So rigid are the regulations that those who doze off are chased out of the hall into the snow.

At five minutes to 9, the bedtime signal is sounded and seminarists lay out their bedding. Lights are out at 9 P.M. Tired out by their labors of the day, they fall immediately into a heavy dreamless sleep.

The only sound heard from then on is that of quiet footsteps as the monks on night duty go through the darkened halls and corridors, guarding their monastery against fire and theft.

## The Satori of Mrs. L. T. S.

As this personal account indicates, *satori* is a possibility not only for secluded monks but also for those actively engaged in the affairs of the world. *Satori* is frequently misunderstood. It is commonly thought that an enlightened individual “just acts naturally.” Although to the Buddhist enlightenment does mean personal freedom, self-discipline and moral responsibility are also important characteristics of an enlightened person. As Mrs. L. T. S.’s account informs us, learning to “act naturally” is not a simple matter.

Mrs. L. T. S., An American Artist, Age 51

I had come to Zen and the Pendle Hill (Pennsylvania) sesshin<sup>1</sup> obliquely and inevitably. As I look back over my shoulder at the apparent meandering of my path to the moment of realization, I see that it led straight to the sound of that tiny kinhin<sup>2</sup> bell. As a sculptor, as a wife and mother, as a drunk, and finally as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, I had good pre-training.

I suppose the first step in this life was the knowing, at about fifteen, that I must be an artist. This knowing coincided with a total rejection of Christianity (as I saw it) and an earnest groping for truth within myself.

1. “Concentrating the mind”—special weeks during the year when the monastery’s regular daily activities are suspended, and the time given almost entirely to meditation (zazen).

2. Period of silent rhythmic walking during meditation interrupting from time to time the long sitting. A bell is sounded to start the walk.

In a few years I discovered stone, and again I knew that carving was my way—slow and hard—as the inner groping was slow and hard.

I was determined to experience as much as possible, so marriage and family followed. But in time my zest for living became throttled. Life was too much for me, it began to pinch and bruise. Then I discovered blessed alcohol, which subtly dulled my pain and unshackled my soaring spirit.

Stone rested silently, untouched. My husband and children, demanding my love, were pushed aside. No sculpture. No wholehearted acceptance of family. Just pain and guilt and inadequacy. And slowly alcohol took over and controlled my life. I no longer knew my center.

Life was a bad dream. Struggling from one twenty-four hours to the next, I was

† Philip Kapleau, *The Three Pillars of Zen* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).



controlled by fear and guilt and the secret bottle. I would not believe that *I* could not find a way out. So eight years of psychiatry and attempts at every method of self-discipline I knew of followed. But I was still trapped.

One morning, which seemed no different from all the other terrible mornings, I phoned Alcoholics Anonymous for help. With this act I was at last freed to truly look at myself, and with the help of all the other alcoholics who had lived through the same hell, to *be* myself. I stopped drinking. I learned that there is something infinitely more powerful than my small human mind. And I knew that I must find it, know it, see it, *be it*.

My search had begun!

A few weeks later, idly looking at books on a bargain counter, I picked up *How To Know God*, a translation by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood of Patanjali's *Aphorisms*. I was stunned! Patanjali had known and taught, perhaps two thousand years ago, what I had just discovered for myself. This book I read and reread and studied and puzzled over for two months on the deck of our schooner as we sailed up the Atlantic coast and down again on a vacation trip. All footnote material was tracked down, books ordered and devoured.

The deep need for a teacher was answered by my finding Swami Pramananda, who agreed to help me. He guided and directed me, started me in disciplined meditation, helped me sort out hallucinations from reality, prepared me for the great plunging effort at Pendle Hill.

In the course of my reading I had found references to Zen in Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy*. This I knew was for me. I

continued to read, to practice *kriya*<sup>3</sup> meditation, though not to sit in the Zen way.

Entirely unexpectedly I was given an opportunity to go to Japan for a few months to supervise the construction of an exhibit I had designed. There I ruthlessly, persistently chased Zen. And there I was shown, as ruthlessly, that the only place to chase it was within myself. I was told to sit.

I sat. I sat at sesshin at Engaku-ji, Ryutaku-ji, and briefly at Nanzen-ji. I sat at Ryosen-an in Daitoku-ji.

It happened this way. Before leaving America I had heard of Engaku-ji, so there I went. When I arrived in a cold November rain, I had no idea what to do, no introduction to anyone, no understanding of Japanese. Not knowing which way to turn, I stood irresolute, absolutely alone in a grey, deserted landscape, with rain soaking through my raincoat, running down my neck, dripping into my shoes. A dark figure ran out in the rain. Helplessly we looked at each other. Words tumbled out, Japanese and English. He beckoned me to follow and led me to a door where he knocked and called. A figure appeared. It was a young Englishwoman, who, after a brisk conversation in Japanese with my guide, asked what she could do for me.

She took me to the head monk and arranged for me to stay (they were in sesshin), taught me how to get through the meals, requested an interview with the roshi [Zen master], and interpreted for me—was my guide and good friend. Her final gift was to introduce me to an American Zen student, who arranged by telephone for me to go to Ryutaku-ji for more sitting.

So it went—on and on—kindness from

3. Method of meditation used in yoga.

so many people, and painful, painful sitting. Wherever I sought help in Japan, from a roshi, a monk, or a lay student, I found it. The compassion of all these people for my floundering ignorance has been infinite, and I am so grateful.

The ting of that tiny bell at the Pendle Hill sesshin was the shock, the force that crumbled walls that had been gently eroding through four years of zazen, and before that five years of *kriya* yoga every day, every night. Patiently, stubbornly, I had sat, sat, sat. Sometimes a long time, sometimes a few minutes, but always, always every day. Sitting patiently had become so familiar that I accepted it as naturally and uneventfully as breathing.

When I arrived at the Pendle Hill sesshin I had never seen Yasutani-roshi before. His monk interpreter I had met at Ryutaku-ji, where I had attended a sesshin four years earlier. I was braced for the physical misery of four and a half days of zazen, but I also knew well that the reward was clarity and peace. After attending the sesshin in Delaware conducted by Nakagawa-roshi in 1961, I had jotted down: "I feel that I've been turned inside out, shaken, and rinsed in pure, clear water."

So this Pendle Hill sesshin began. About forty strangers sat together, some merely curious, some very earnest. Yasutani-roshi divided the group, according to their expressed purpose for being there, into smaller groups. He spoke privately to each of the groups, explaining the discipline they were to follow during the next four and a half days. I was one of those who sought enlightenment, and to this group he gave the koan Joshu's Mu.<sup>4</sup>

I began to sit with Mu.

The first day Mu was no hot iron ball—in fact it was a heavy lump of lead in my belly.

"Melt that lead!" the roshi commanded. But it would not melt, so next day I hammered with Mu, and came to know that its center was a brilliant, crystalline light, like a star or a diamond, so brilliant that it outlined and illumined physical objects, dazzled my eyes, filled me with light. My body felt weightless. I thought: "This is Mu." But the roshi counseled: "Hallucinations. Ignore them. Concentrate harder."

By the end of that day there was no light, just drowsiness, infinite weariness, and Mu. Before going to bed I wrote a note to myself "Now I am *determined*. If others can do it I can too! And I *will*! I will exhaust every bit of strength and stubborn determination." Then I slept, with Mu blanketing dreams, Mu moving in and out with each breath.

The third day my eyes would not stay open—with each breath they closed. When I fought this off, my mind was immediately filled with problems of my family and marriage. It was a terrible struggle against both sleep and mental torment. With each breath I was determined to get hold of Mu, but it went down and down and disappeared in nothingness.

"Go deeper," the roshi said. "Question 'What is this Mu?' to the very bottom."

Deeper and deeper I went. . . .

My hold was torn loose and I went spinning. . . .

To the center of the earth!

To the center of the cosmos!

To the *Center*.

*I was There.*

With the sound of the little kinhin bell

4. This is a famous koan. A monk asked Master Joshu: "Has the dog Buddha-nature or not?" The master answered: "Mu!"



I suddenly *knew*.

Too late to see the roshi that night, I rushed to the first dokusan<sup>5</sup> in the morning.

Questions. . . .

Sharp voices. . . .

Laughter. . . .

Movement. . . .

The roshi said: "Now you understand that seeing Mu is seeing God."

I *understood*.

[After miscellaneous koan zazen at the Brewster, New York, sesshin several weeks later:]

I feel clean.

I feel free.

I feel ready to live every day with zest, by *choice*!

I am delighted by the adventure of every moment.

I feel as though I have just awakened from a restless, disjointed dream. Everything looks different!

The world no longer rides heavily on my back. It is under my belt. I turned a somersault and swallowed it.

I am no longer restless.

At last I have what I want.

5. Scheduled private session.

## Zen Stories

A Zen story conveys an important Zen truth that cannot be grasped rationally, for it is not the aim of Zen to teach but to awaken and give man an awareness of himself and his surroundings. For this reason Zen is primarily concerned with direct, individual experience. This explains why most of the stories are not “closed”; that is, the points of the stories are implied and ultimately they must be completed by the reader or listener.

The Zen story does not dictate to man any form of behavior; it suggests a truth and forces the mind to reflect upon it. Enlightenment must come from within.

### Obedience

The master Bankei's talks were attended not only by Zen students but by persons of all ranks and sects. He never quoted sutras nor indulged in scholastic dissertations. Instead, his words were spoken directly from his heart to the hearts of his listeners.

His large audiences angered a priest of the Nichiren sect because the adherents had left to hear about Zen. The self-centered Nichiren priest came to the temple, determined to debate with Bankei.

“Hey, Zen teacher!” he called out. “Wait a minute. Whoever respects you will obey what you say, but a man like myself does

not respect you. Can you make me obey you?”

“Come up beside me and I will show you,” said Bankei.

Proudly the priest pushed his way through the crowd to the teacher.

Bankei smiled. “Come over to my left side.”

The priest obeyed.

“No,” said Bankei, “we may talk better if you are on the right side. Step over here.”

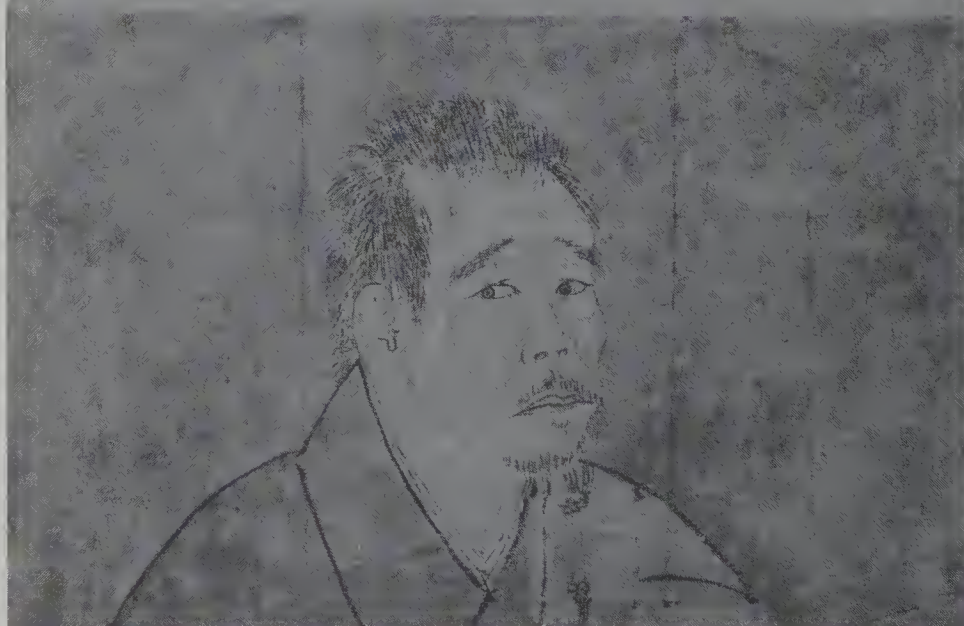
The priest proudly stepped over to the right.

“You see,” observed Bankei, “you are obeying me and I think you are a very gentle person. Now sit down and listen.”

<sup>†</sup>Paul Reys, ed., *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1957).



萬世百孫不知禪  
碧雲面前誰說禪  
三十年來肩重  
一人荷擔松源禪  
前往大德林  
頂相自贊謹拜書



*This Zen scroll is a tribute to Ikkyū (1394–1481), one of the first Zen masters to teach the techniques of the tea ceremony. Zen affects many areas of life, and this ceremony embodies the ideals of simplicity, serenity and harmony.*

## A Cup of Tea

Nan-in, a Japanese master during the Meiji era (1868–1912), received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen.

Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, and kept on pouring.

The professor watched the overflow until he no longer could restrain himself. "It is overfull. No more will go in!"

"Like this cup," Nan-in said, "you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"

## The Tunnel

Zenkai, the son of a samurai, journeyed to Edo and there became the retainer of a high official. He fell in love with the official's wife and was discovered. In self-defence, he slew the official. Then he ran away with the wife.

Both of them later became thieves. But the woman was so greedy that Zenkai grew disgusted. Finally, leaving her, he journeyed far away to the province of Buzen, where he became a wandering mendicant.

To atone for his past, Zenkai resolved to accomplish some good deed in his lifetime. Knowing of a dangerous road over a cliff that had caused the death and injury of many persons, he resolved to cut a tunnel through the mountain there.

Begging food in the daytime, Zenkai worked at night digging his tunnel. When thirty years had gone by, the tunnel was 2,280 feet long, 20 feet high, and 30 feet wide.

Two years before the work was com-

pleted, the son of the official he had slain, who was a skillful swordsman, found Zenkai out and came to kill him in revenge.

"I will give you my life willingly," said Zenkai. "Only let me finish this work. On the day it is completed, then you may kill me."

So the son awaited the day. Several months passed and Zenkai kept on digging. The son grew tired of doing nothing and began to help with the digging. After he had helped for more than a year, he came to admire Zenkai's strong will and character.

At last the tunnel was completed and the people could use it and travel in safety.

"Now cut off my head," said Zenkai. "My work is done."

"How can I cut off my own teacher's head?" asked the younger man with tears in his eyes.

## A Parable

Buddha told a parable in a sutra:

A man traveling across a field encountered a tiger. He fled, the tiger after him. Coming to a precipice, he caught hold of the root of a wild vine and swung himself down over the edge. The tiger sniffed at him from above. Trembling, the man looked down to where, far below, another tiger was waiting to eat him. Only the vine sustained him.

Two mice, one white and one black, little by little started to gnaw away the vine. The man saw a luscious strawberry near him. Grasping the vine with one hand, he plucked the strawberry with the other. How sweet it tasted!



## Mokusen's Hand

Mokusen Hiki was living in a temple in the province of Tamba. One of his adherents complained of the stinginess of his wife.

Mokusen visited the adherent's wife and showed her his clenched fist before her face.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the surprised woman.

"Suppose my fist were always like that. What would you call it?" he asked.

"Deformed," replied the woman.

Then he opened his hand flat in her face and asked: "Suppose it were always like that. What then?"

"Another kind of deformity," said the wife.

"If you understand that much," finished Mokusen, "you are a good wife." Then he left.

After his visit, this wife helped her husband to distribute as well as to save.

## Three Days More

Suiwo, the disciple of Hakuin,<sup>1</sup> was a good teacher. During one summer seclusion period, a pupil came to him from a southern island of Japan.

Suiwo gave him the problem: "Hear the sound of one hand."

The pupil remained three years but could not pass this test. One night he came in tears to Suiwo. "I must return south in shame and embarrassment," he said, "for I cannot solve my problem."

"Wait one week more and meditate con-

stantly," advised Suiwo. Still no enlightenment came to the pupil. "Try for another week," said Suiwo. The pupil obeyed, but in vain.

"Still another week." Yet this was of no avail. In despair the student begged to be released, but Suiwo requested another meditation of five days. They were without result. Then he said: "Meditate for three days longer, then if you fail to attain enlightenment, you had better kill yourself."

On the second day the pupil was enlightened.

## The Real Miracle

When Bankei was preaching at Ryumon temple, a Shinshu<sup>2</sup> priest, who believed in salvation through the repetition of the name of the Buddha of Love, was jealous of his large audience and wanted to debate with him.

Bankei was in the midst of a talk when the priest appeared, but the fellow made such a disturbance that Bankei stopped his discourse and asked about the noise.

"The founder of our sect," boasted the priest, "had such miraculous powers that he held a brush in his hand on one bank of the river, his attendant held up a paper on the other bank, and the teacher wrote the holy name of Amida<sup>3</sup> through the air. Can you do such a wonderful thing?"

Bankei replied lightly: "Perhaps your fox can perform that trick, but that is not the manner of Zen. My miracle is that when I feel hungry I eat, and when I feel thirsty I drink."

2. Buddhist sect.

1. Hakuin (1685-1768) is one of the great modern Zen masters of Japan.

3. The "Buddha of Infinite Light"—the personified Principle of Buddhahood who dwells in a conventional heaven.



*The Zen sense of solitude is one mixed with peace and independence from worldly things. The boat floats naturally over the waves without any help and the solitary angler, standing aloof from the world, does not need wealth, power or reputation to subsist and be contented.*

### Calling Card

Keichu, the great Zen teacher of the Meiji era, was the head of Tofuku, a cathedral in Kyoto. One day the governor of Kyoto called upon him for the first time.

His attendant presented the card of the governor, which read: Kitagaki, Governor of Kyoto.

"I have no business with such a fellow," said Keichu to his attendant. "Tell him to get out of here."

The attendant carried the card back with apologies. "That was my error," said the governor, and with a pencil he scratched out the words Governor of Kyoto. "Ask your teacher again."

"Oh, is that Kitagaki?" exclaimed the teacher when he saw the card. "I want to see that fellow."

### Temper

A Zen student came to Bankei and complained: "Master, I have an ungovernable temper. How can I cure it?"

"You have something very strange," replied Bankei. "Let me see what you have."

"Just now I cannot show it to you," replied the other.

"When can you show it to me?" asked Bankei.

"It arises unexpectedly," replied the student.

"Then," concluded Bankei, "it must not be your own true nature. If it were, you could show it to me at any time. When you were born you did not have it, and your parents did not give it to you. Think that over."



## Not Far from Buddhahood

A university student while visiting Gasan asked him: "Have you ever read the Christian Bible?"

"No, read it to me," said Gasan.

The student opened the Bible and read from St. Matthew: "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. . . . Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."

Gasan said: "Whoever uttered those words I consider an enlightened man."

The student continued reading: "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Gasan remarked: "That is excellent. Whoever said that is not far from Buddhahood."

## Haiku

To the extent that it is possible to point directly at reality with words, the haiku poem does this. The haiku is brief, only seventeen syllables in length. It is totally unsuitable as a form for commentary about life or for detailed descriptions of nature. On the contrary, the haiku poem transmits to us a color, a sound, a feeling that reach our mind, bring it closer to nature and help us soar above the concrete or particular detail.

*Haranaka ya  
mono ni mo tsukazu  
naku hibari*

On the moor: from things  
detached completely—  
how the skylark sings!

*Kane tsukanu  
mura wa nani wo ka  
haru no kure*

A village where they ring  
no bells!—oh, what *do* they do  
at dusk in spring?

† Donald Keene, ed., *Anthology of Japanese Literature* (New York: Grove Press, 1955).



*Chō tori no  
shiranu hana ari  
aki no sora*

To bird and butterfly  
it is unknown, this flower here:  
the autumn sky.

*Ara umi ya  
Sado ni yokotau  
ama no gawa*

How rough a sea!  
and, stretching over Sado Isle,  
the Galaxy. . . .

*Yagate shinu  
keshiki wa miezu  
semi no koe*

Very soon they die —  
but of that there is no sign  
in the locust-cry.

*Hiya hiya to  
kabe wo fumaete  
hirune kana*

How very cool it feels:  
taking a noonday nap, to have  
this wall against my heels.

*Futari mishi  
yuki wa kotoshi mo  
furikeru ka*

Snow that we two  
saw together — this year  
is it fallen anew?

*Inazuma ya  
yami no kata yuku  
goi no koe*

A sudden lightning gleam:  
off into the darkness goes  
the night heron's scream.

*Tabi ni yande  
yume wa kareno wo  
kakemeguru*

On a journey, ill –  
and my dreams, on withered fields  
are wandering still.

*Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694)*

*Yado no haru  
nanimonaki koso  
nanimonare*

My hut, in spring:  
true, there is nothing in it –  
there is Everything!

*Yamaguchi Sōdō (1642-1716)*

*Kojiki kana  
Tenchi wo kitaru  
natsugoromo*

There a beggar goes!  
Heaven and Earth he's wearing  
for his summer clothes!

*Neko ni kuwareshi wo  
semi no tsuma wa  
sudakuran*

Eaten by the cat!  
Perhaps the cricket's widow  
is bewailing that.





*In order to stimulate and free the mind of the viewer the Zen painter creates a series of impressions instead of direct representations of life.*

*Meigetsu ya*  
*tatami no ue ni*  
*matsu no kage*

Bright the full moon shines:  
here upon the matted floor,  
shadows of the pines.

*Enomoto Kikaku (1661-1707)*

*No mo yama mo*  
*yuki ni torareta*  
*nani mo nashi*

Mountains and plains,  
all are taken by the snow—  
nothing remains.

*Naitō Jōsō (1661-1704)*

*Samidare ya*  
*aru yo hisoka ni*  
*matsu no tsuki*

All the rains of June:  
and then one evening, secretly,  
through the pines, the moon!

*Ōshima Ryota (1718-1787)*

*Haru no mori*  
*tori toru tori mo*  
*neburi kana*

The grove in spring:  
the birds that catch the birds—they too  
are slumbering.

*Takakuwa Rankō (1726-1798)*

*Soko noite*  
*take uesase yo*  
*hikigaeru*

Get out of my road  
and allow me to plant these  
bamboos, Mr. Toad.

*Miura Chora (1729-1780)*



*Mezurashi to  
miru mono goto ni  
haru ya yuku*

“Marvelous!” I say,  
and with each single thing I see  
springtime fades away.

*Takai Kitō (1741-1789)*

*Yo ga yokuba  
mo hitotsu tomare  
meshi no hae*

If the times were good,  
I’d say, “Sit down!—one more of you!”  
flies around my food.

*Isshaku no  
taki mo oto shite  
yūsuzumi*

A one-foot waterfall  
it too makes noises, and at night  
the coolness of it all!

*Uguisu ya  
doroashi nuguu  
ume no hana*

A bush warbler comes—  
and starts to wipe his muddy feet  
among the blossoming plums.

*Tōyama no  
medama ni utsuru  
tombo kana*

In its eye  
the far-off hills are mirrored—  
dragonfly!

*Asagao no  
hana de fuitaru  
iori kana*

A morning-glory vine  
in its full bloom, has thatched  
this hut of mine.

*Utsukushi ya  
shōji no ana no  
ama no gawa*

A lovely thing to see:  
through the paper window's holes  
the Galaxy.

*Ware to kite  
asobe yo oya no  
nai suzume*

Come to me – with each other  
let's play – little sparrow  
without any mother.

*Furusato ya  
yoru mo sawaru mo  
ibara no hana*

The place where I was born:  
all I come to – all I touch –  
blossoms of the thorn!

*Toshikasa wo  
urayamaretaru  
samusa kana*

When one is old  
one is envied by people –  
oh, but it's cold!

*Kobayashi Issa (1763-1828)*



*The Buddhist concepts of the impermanence and unreality of life and nature are expressed on this Chinese scroll by clouds and half-glimpses of distant views that give the landscape a quality of insubstantiality.*



## "Me and Mine"

Buddhist teachings are communicated in a variety of ways: the parable, the direct question-answer session, and the topic for meditation. The first two selections originated in India, the third in China. In each selection the reader is confronted with a common sense or everyday attitude which is then either implicitly or explicitly contrasted with a Buddhist viewpoint.

### The Parable of Me and Mine

Some children were playing beside a river. They made castles of sand, and each child defended his castle and said, "This one is mine." They kept their castles separate and would not allow any mistakes about which was whose. When the castles were all finished, one child kicked over someone else's castle and completely destroyed it. The owner of the castle flew into a rage, pulled the other child's hair, struck him with his fist and bawled out, "He has spoilt my castle! Come along all of

you and help me to punish him as he deserves." The others all came to his help. They beat the child with a stick and then stamped on him as he lay on the ground. . . . Then they went on playing in their sand castles, each saying, "This is mine; no one else may have it. Keep away! Don't touch my castle!" But evening came; it was getting dark and they all thought they ought to be going home. No one now cared what became of his castle. One child stamped on his, another pushed his over with both his hands. Then they turned away and went back, each to his home.

†Edward Conze, ed., *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964).

## Nationality

*Question:* How can he (the practitioner of Dhyana) rid himself of attention to nationality?

*Answer:* If the practitioner has in mind that his country is fertile and happy, peaceful, and the abode of many good men, he will (during his Dhyana exercises) be continually tugged at by the rope of attention to nationality. In order to get rid of this fault he must turn his attention to the following points: A man possessed of wisdom ought not to fix his thoughts upon such a subject. And why? Because his country is consumed time and again by the fire of many kinds of transgression. Because there are people in it who are starving and in the last stage of exhaustion. Let him again reflect that in no country do things remain quiet for ever; and again, that there is no country where the bitterness of old age, sickness and death does not prevail. Flight from the bodily afflictions of one place leads only to the bodily afflictions of another place. Even if he could stop living in any kingdom at all, wherever he escaped to he would still find misery.

In short, even if a country is fertile, happy and peaceful, so long as the passions are still at work there, the mind will produce misery and pain. Such a country cannot really be called good. Only a country that can get rid of these sundry evils, pare away the bonds of passion and so free the mind from distress—only such a country can be called a good country.

All living creatures are subject to two kinds of pain—pain of the body and pain of the mind—and these two afflict them perpetually. There can be no country without these two kinds of affliction. Moreover

every country has certain defects. In one it is too cold, in another too hot; there is not enough to eat, or there is a lot of illness or many robbers; or again some countries are misruled by their king. To these countries, with their various kinds of evil, the practitioner's heart should not be attached.

Such is the true view which enables him to rid himself (during Dhyana practice) of attention to nationality.

## A Nice Mountain

The Dhyana Master Wei-k'uan (A.D. 755-817) settled at the Shao-lin Monastery on Mt. Sung in the thirteenth year of Cheng-yüan (A.D. 797). A monk asked him, "What is the Way?" "This is a nice mountain, isn't it?" he replied. "But I was asking you about the Way, not about the mountain," said the monk. "The mountain is something you understand about," said Wei-k'uan. "The Way is not."

He was asked by a monk whether a dog has the Buddha-nature. "It has," he said. "And have you also got it?" asked the monk. "I!" said Wei-k'uan. "No, indeed." "But All Living Creatures are supposed to have it," said the monk. "I daresay," said Wei-k'uan. "But I am not All Living Creatures." "What are you then?" asked the monk. "A Buddha?" "No, not a Buddha," said Wei-k'uan. "Well really, what sort of thing are you?" asked the monk. "No sort of thing," said Wei-k'uan.

## Conclusions

1. Draw up a list of assumptions shared by various schools of Buddhism. Discuss some of the differences between the schools.
2. Does knowledge of a particular religion provide us with any significant information about a people or a culture? Use Buddhism and one other religion in framing your answer to this question.
3. What basic differences do you see between Western religions, such as the Judaic and Christian faiths and an Eastern religion, such as Buddhism, in regard to man's notion of the spiritual life?
4. List some spiritual experiences in Western culture that might be similar to *satori*?
5. Can you find in Western literature, particularly in poetry, examples of the spirit of Zen as seen in the haiku poems?



## Suggested Readings

Blyth, R. H. *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics*, Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1942.

Various themes—some poetical, some philosophical, and other religious—provide sense and continuity in this study in comparative literature. It is the contention of the author that the spirit of Zen is not confined to the Orient but is found in life and literature throughout the world.

Conze, Edward. *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1959.

The author presents the essentials of Buddhism in historical and doctrinal perspective. Among the subjects treated are basic Buddhist beliefs, monasticism, popular Buddhism, and teachings of the Theravada and the Mahayana. There is also a brief survey of Buddhist schools which are non-Indian in either spirit or origin.

Kapleau, Philip. *The Three Pillars of Zen*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.

Included in this source book on Zen are Yasutani-roshi's Introductory Lectures on Zen training, his commentary on the *koan* Mu, and his private interviews with ten Westerners. Interesting and important are the accounts of contemporary enlightenment experiences.

Smith, Huston. *The Religions of Man*, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965.

Seven of the world's major religions are treated in this work. Especially relevant are the extensive chapters on Hinduism and Buddhism, comprising nearly one-half of the material in the book. The emphasis in each of the seven studies is on beliefs and practices.

Watts, Alan. *The Way of Zen*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1957.

*The Way of Zen* is divided into two sections. The first section provides a background and history. The philosophy of the Tao, Hinduism, and the origins of Buddhism are woven together both historically and philosophically to introduce the subject of Zen. The second section deals primarily with beliefs and practices, and it contains a chapter on Zen in the arts.

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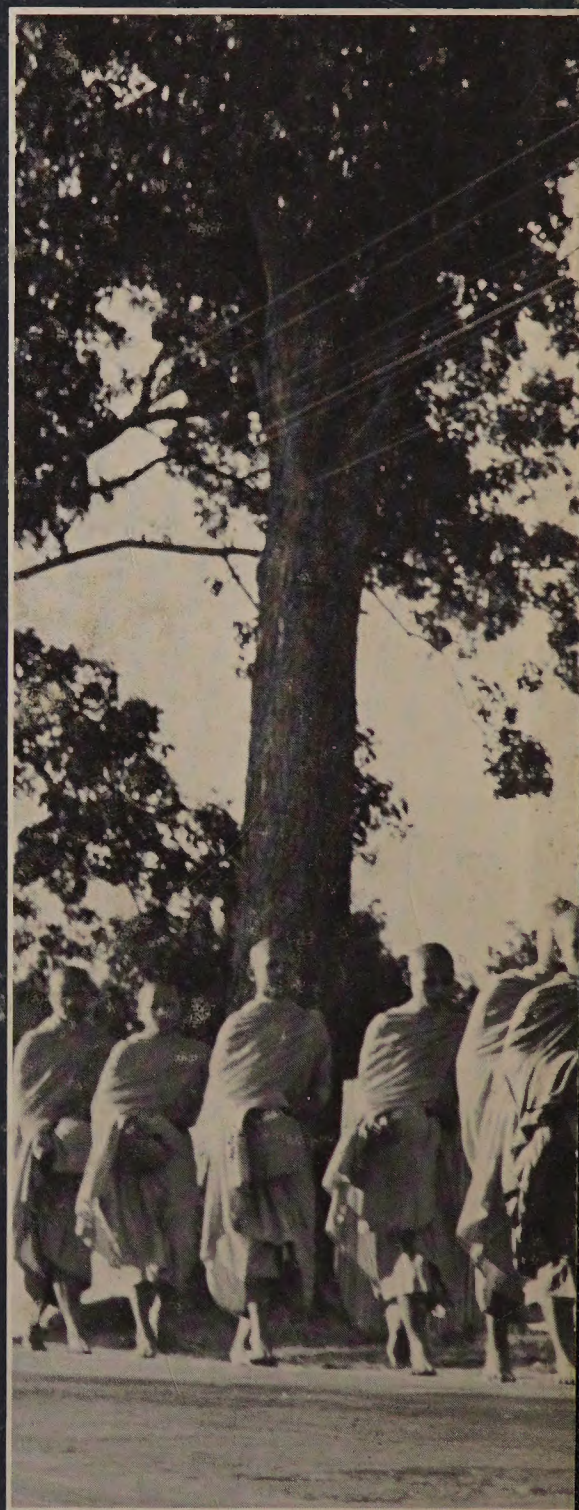
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